



What's New

by Bob Park

AMERICAN PHYSICAL SOCIETY

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1. HERBAL NONSENSE: DON'T MESS AROUND WITH MOTHER NATURE.

Even as many of the most popular herbal medications failed miserably when subjected to actual tests ([WN 23 Aug 02](#)), one concoction of saw palmetto, said to include seven Chinese and Indian herbs, seemed to be just as effective in treating prostate cancer as the latest prescription drugs. This was not as remarkable as it seemed: as a natural dietary supplement, PC-SPES could be sold over the counter without proof of purity or effectiveness ([WN 16 Aug 02](#)). But the FDA contended PC-SPES contained prescription- only drugs, and pulled it off the market. It is now confirmed by independent laboratories that PC-SPES contained warfarin, a blood thinner, indomethacin, an analgesic, and synthetic estrogen. These are prescription-only drugs not found in nature.

2. PATENT NONSENSE: COURT DENIES BLACKLIGHT POWER APPEAL.

The status of BlackLight Power's intellectual property is fuzzier than ever. BLP was awarded Patent 6,024,935 for "Lower-Energy Hydrogen Methods and Structures," a process for getting hydrogen atoms into a "state below the ground state" ([WN 18 Feb 00](#)). You might expect these shrunken hydrogen atoms, called "hydrinos," to have a pretty special chemistry. Do they ever! Indeed, a second patent application titled "Hydride Compounds" had been assigned a number and BLP had paid the fee. Several other patents were in the works. That's when things started heading South. Prompted by an outside inquiry (who would do such a thing?), the patent director became concerned that this hydrino stuff required the orbital electron to behave "contrary to the known laws of physics and chemistry." The Hydride Compounds application was withdrawn for further review and the other patent applications were rejected. Since the one patent already issued involves the same violations of basic laws of physics, there is a cloud over its status as well. BLP filed suit in federal court arguing that it was too late for the Patent Office to change its mind. The court was not impressed, so BLP appealed the decision. In denying the appeal, the court said the Patent Office has a responsibility to take "extraordinary action" to withdraw a questionable patent. The long-awaited IPO may have to wait a little longer.

3. LANCE BASS: MAYBE THE RUSSIANS JUST DON'T LIKE MUSIC.

Russian space officials say the boy-band star stiffed them on the \$20M fare to the ISS, so they evicted him from Star City and gave his seat on Soyuz to a box of supplies. But MirCorp

still needs the dollars, and deals are still being discussed. One is said to involve a major soft drink company. Pepsi and Coke have fought it out in space for years. Mir cosmonauts inflated a giant Pepsi can on a space walk (WN 5 Nov 99), while Coke was involved in developing a \$3M micro-gravity Coke machine that gave only foam when it was tested before a world-wide audience on television.

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